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New York

President:	Mr. Biaou	(Benin)
Members:	Algeria	Mr. Katti
	Argentina	Mr. Garcia Moritan
	Brazil	Mr. Cardoso
	China	Mr. Cheng Jingye
	Denmark	Mr. Rehfeld
	France	Mr. Wiltzer
	Greece	Mr. Daratzikis
	Japan	Mr. Shimamori
	Philippines	Ms. Taguiang
	Romania	Mr. Stamate
	Russian Federation	Mr. Rogachev
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Schultz
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mrs. Kafanabo
	United States of America	Mr. Olson

Agenda

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2005/72)

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05-24690 (E)

The meeting resumed at 3.35 p.m.

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the members of the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Indonesia, Mali and Niger, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to remind all speakers of what I stated during this morning's meeting, namely, that they should limit their statements to no more than five minutes, in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate their texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

I will also not individually invite speakers to take seats at the Council table or invite them to resume their seats at the side of the Council Chamber. When a speaker takes the floor the Conference Officer will seat the next speaker on my list at the table. I thank participants for their understanding and cooperation.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Luxembourg, on whom I now call.

Mr. Hoscheit (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The acceding countries, Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and the potential candidates, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro align themselves with this statement.

I thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity you have given us to debate the important issue of children in armed conflict. I also wish to pay tribute to Mr. Olara Otunnu, Under-Secretary-General and Special Representative of the Secretary-General, as well as to Ms. Rima Salah, Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), for their briefings and their commendable work. I would like also to thank other key players who have contributed to progress on this important subject.

It is absolutely fitting that the Security Council has once again taken up the issue of children in armed conflict. Despite the welcome news that the estimated number of child soldiers has declined from 380,000 to 300,000 in the last 18 months, a disturbing gap remains between the standards and the initiatives developed for the protection of children, on the one hand, and the atrocities that continue to be perpetrated against children by parties to armed conflicts, on the other. Those atrocities must end.

While the European Union welcomes the adoption of resolution 1539 (2004), in April 2004, it also notes that the goals set by the United Nations have not yet been adequately met. In that context, the European Union welcomes the report (S/2005/72) of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict of 9 February 2005, which identifies persisting shortcomings and proposes remedies.

The European Union agrees that it is important and urgent to establish a systematic and comprehensive monitoring, reporting and compliance mechanism to provide systematic, reliable and accurate information on child rights violations in situations of armed conflict using the experience of United Nations peacekeeping missions and country teams. In that context, the European Union encourages all relevant United Nations actors, and in particular UNICEF, as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), to continue their coordinated efforts to ensure both systematic monitoring and reporting of violations and preventive and rehabilitating action to assist child victims of armed conflict. Furthermore, with regard to monitoring and reporting processes, the European Union would like to stress the need for particular emphasis on the situation of girls, on gender-based violence and on humanitarian access to children.

As contemplated in the Secretary-General's report, the European Union supports the mainstreaming of child-specific best practices in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes at every stage of the work of the United Nations. It also calls for more effective rehabilitation and reintegration of

children associated with armed groups back into their communities. The Union is concerned by the negative side-effects of illicit cross-border activities on children in armed conflict. The abduction and recruitment of children, trafficking in small arms and light weapons and the illicit exploitation of natural resources often go together and reinforce each other.

In accordance with resolutions 1379 (2001), 1460 (2003) and 1539 (2004) and in view of the widespread and unacceptable pattern of violations recorded in the Secretary-General's report of 2005, the European Union believes that the Security Council should take appropriate measures against the parties listed in the annexes to the report, who are guilty of persistent violations and have not taken steps to end those violations. In addition to the information concerning the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, the European Union welcomes the inclusion this year of other violations and abuses committed against children in the lists annexed to the report. The European Union urges States and other parties to armed conflict listed in annexes I and II of the Secretary-General's latest report to immediately stop the recruitment and use of girls and boys in situations of armed conflict and to end the violation of their obligations flowing from international humanitarian and human rights law.

In addition to violations perpetrated against children in situations of armed conflict, the European Union is also gravely concerned about allegations of abhorrent sexual misconduct by United Nations peacekeeping personnel. Although the European Union welcomes the ongoing investigation, it urges a prompt review of this very serious problem and requests the Secretary-General and troop-contributing countries to strictly enforce the standards contained in the Secretary General's bulletin on special measures to prevent sexual violence and the exploitation of children, as well as to ensure that perpetrators of such abuses are properly brought to justice.

The European Union fully subscribes to the views and recommendations of the Secretary-General with respect to the role of the International Criminal Court (ICC), because of its deterrent effect and the possibilities it offers for the prosecution of war crimes, including crimes against children. The European Union stresses the importance of putting an immediate end to impunity. In that context, we urge States to accelerate the process of ratification or accession to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which contains an important provision classifying the conscription or enlistment of children under the age of 15 as a war crime. The European Union also urges States that have not done so to accede to the Convention on the Rights of the Child as a matter of priority, and to sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

For its part, the European Union is determined to continue its work to raise awareness about the plight of children affected by armed conflict and to intensify its efforts to address the issue in an effective and comprehensive manner. In December 2003, the Union adopted guidelines on children in armed conflict, following consultations with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, UNICEF and NGOs active in this area. Armed with a clear plan of action, the European Union carried out a range of political, diplomatic and financial initiatives during the past year.

First, we have instituted a system of reporting by European Union heads of mission in affected countries, drawing on the list of countries where parties to armed conflict have been censured by the Security Council for their recruitment and use of children. The reports pay particular attention to the need to have a clear picture not only of the recruitment of child soldiers, but also of attacks against schools and hospitals, the blockage of humanitarian access, sexual and gender-based violence against children, and abduction.

Secondly, reporting and analysis have been accompanied by recommendations for action, such as enhanced funding of relevant programmes and demarches. European Union special representatives, including in the Great Lakes region of Africa, have been tasked with paying full attention to the issue when executing their mandates.

Thirdly, in cooperation with UNICEF, the European Union has launched a children's rights training programme for Union officials and the issue has also been introduced in training activities related to the European Security and Defence Policy and crisis management.

Finally, as children are a particularly vulnerable group in humanitarian crises, they have been a priority of the European Union's humanitarian aid policy for several years. The Humanitarian Aid Department has

financed projects on child-related activities, such as therapeutic feeding, vaccination, primary education and the reintegration of child soldiers, for a total of €37 million in 2004.

The Plan of Action recently adopted by the European Union is meant to further reinforce the implementation of its Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict through political and practical Union involvement on the ground and a better use of the wide range of tools at our disposal. The Plan of Action intends to match technical assistance with political action by identifying gaps and possibilities for increased cooperation on those issues. As a first step, three focus countries have been identified for pilot projects: Uganda, Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka.

The European Union agrees that the main challenges identified in the Secretary-General's report — such as the establishment of an effective monitoring, reporting and compliance mechanism; the need to impose appropriate measures where insufficient or no progress has been made; and the necessity for collective action at the national, regional and international levels — need to be addressed urgently. The Security Council has begun negotiations on a new draft resolution, which we hope will adequately deal with those issues.

Let me conclude by underlining that the European Union stands ready to continue to work closely with the United Nations system, including the Office of the Special Representative, UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as with national and regional organizations, non-governmental organizations and civil society, to ensure coherence and effectiveness in our efforts to relieve the suffering of children in armed conflicts and that those responsible for atrocities against children are held accountable for their crimes. The European Union will continue to play its part in trying to make the implementation phase a reality on the ground as a way to bridge the existing gap between norms and action.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Luxembourg for his kind words addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

I now call on the representative of Nigeria.

Mr. Adekanye (Nigeria): I have the honour of conveying to you, Sir, the sincere appreciation of the Nigerian Foreign Minister, Ambassador Olu Adeniji, for the invitation extended to him to participate in this open debate on children and armed conflict. Ambassador Adeniji could not make the trip to New York, but has asked me to convey his best wishes for a fruitful outcome.

We are indeed grateful to the Republic of Benin for initiating this debate, which is both timely and necessary, as it will afford us an opportunity to focus attention on the urgent steps needed to prevent children from being used as instruments of war.

We thank the Secretary-General for his in-depth report and the Under-Secretary-General and Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu, for his continuing efforts to articulate a workable proposal for a monitoring, reporting and compliance mechanism for children and armed conflict. His insightful statement to the Council this morning set an appropriate tone for addressing the challenges before the international community on that important subject.

In spite of international conventions and protocols that guarantee the safety and protection of children in armed conflict, as well as those that guarantee the rights of the child, innocent children are daily being dragged into the quagmire of armed conflict, with its terrible consequences.

Children are paying heavy tolls for causes they know nothing about and are made pawns in dangerous struggles for political power and control of resources with no regard for their well-being. Although children do not start wars, they are most vulnerable to its deadly effects. They suffer loss of their childhood and become objects of adult manipulation and exploitation. Children are, in most cases of armed conflict, the first victims and the ones most likely to suffer loss of loved ones, abduction, injury, death or sexual exploitation — girls in particular. Furthermore, children are made orphans and, at an early and unprepared age, assume responsibility as heads of families.

Nigeria believes that a fundamental requirement for ending the involvement of children, as well as preventing them from being exploited in situations of armed conflict, is the prevention of conflict. Conflicts do not occur in a vacuum, but are oftentimes the product of an inability to redress, by dialogue and other

means, real or perceived injustices, including economic, social and political exclusion, and marginalization or discrimination based on racial, ethnic, religious or political affiliations.

It is important therefore to identify and tackle head on the root causes of conflict and to deny its perpetrators access to the instruments of war, such as small arms and light weapons, which those children are forced to carry. In that connection, my delegation reiterates its conviction that conflict prevention and resolution strategies must be sincere and comprehensive. They must include a willingness and a capability to take bold and concrete political actions that will lead to the removal of real or perceived injustices.

Nigeria has closely coordinated efforts with like-minded States to meet the challenges posed by conflicts in the West African subregion, in particular, and Africa in general. I wish to mention in that regard significant initiatives among States members of the Economic Community of West African States, which are already yielding positive results. I should also refer to the efforts towards peace and accommodation in Darfur that resulted in the Abuja agreement.

President Obasanjo has made conflict resolution in Africa one of the cardinal foreign policy objectives of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, mindful of the fact that Africa can neither achieve the Millennium Development Goals nor attain the lofty social development targets set by the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen 10 years ago — and renewed only last week at the forty-third session of the Commission for Social Development — unless there is peace, stability and security in our continent. There is a need for increased international cooperation in support of those efforts. There is also a need to strengthen coordination with the African Union in resolving the diverse conflicts in Africa. Above all, we also call on the international community to provide assistance to those countries emerging from conflict to enable them to rebuild their shattered economies and infrastructure.

It is equally essential that the efforts of the international community be geared towards strengthening the rule of law at the international, regional and national levels, and, within that context, towards the protection of children through appropriate mechanisms for monitoring, reporting and enforcing compliance, including through constitutional, legislative, judicial and multisectoral means.

We must put children first — before, during and after conflict. A stop must be put to the recruitment of child soldiers. It is also important to strengthen the protective environment by encouraging countries to ratify and apply treaties that aim to protect children from the physical and emotional trauma of war. On its part, Nigeria has not only ratified and fully incorporated the Convention on the Rights of the Child into its domestic legislation, but it has also strengthened the domestic environment by enacting, in 2003, the Child Rights Act as well as the Trafficking in Persons Prohibition Law Enforcement and Administration Act. Those laws should protect our children and promote their rights.

Urgent action should be taken to totally eradicate, in all its forms and manifestations, the culture of impunity, and, as a follow-up, to bring to justice perpetrators of violence against children, including those who abduct, recruit or conscript children into armed forces.

It is also necessary to improve the monitoring and reporting of child rights violations and to pay greater attention to demobilization and reintegration programmes, including those aimed particularly at girls seriously affected by conflict, and engaging in special and accelerated educational programmes, such as free and compulsory education for child victims of war. There should be continued efforts made to mainstream child protection into United Nations regional and national peacekeeping operations.

My delegation is confident that, working together in an open and transparent manner, in a true spirit of cooperation, with all stakeholders — including the United Nations, regional organizations, State and non-State actors — we can reduce the need for recourse to conflict and thus prevent children from being made instruments and victims of armed conflict. Thus we will have succeeded in creating a world that is truly fit for children.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Nigeria for the kind words he addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Myanmar, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Swe (Myanmar): Mr. President, I wish to congratulate you for holding this open debate on children and armed conflict. Given the gravity of the situation, as described by the Special Representative, Mr. Otunnu, in his moving statement, I believe that today's debate is indeed timely.

The Secretary-General's report has provided us with a useful basis for our deliberations. The report rightfully gives detailed information on compliance and progress regarding situations on the agenda of the Security Council. These are also situations that have a direct impact on peace and security — matters for which the Security Council has primary responsibility.

Like others, we are deeply concerned by accounts in the report of sexual abuse by United Nations peacekeepers. We also share the concern regarding the report's suggestion of initiating direct contact by United Nations actors with non-State actors. While this may be useful in some situations, the general application of this in all situations, would, in our view, be counter-productive.

We are glad to see that, in preparation for this year's report, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General had held a number of briefings and had also made himself available and responded to the queries of Permanent Missions, for which we are grateful. We regret, however, that no real consultations took place with those Member States which are not in the Security Council.

We are also dismayed that the report continues to retain a high degree of selectivity and double standards.

It is widely known and accepted that insurgent groups in Myanmar extensively recruit and use child soldiers. The Government, on the other hand, has been taking measures not only to prevent children from being recruited into the insurgent groups but also to ensure that no under-age children are recruited into the Tatmadaw, the Myanmar Armed Forces. Tatmadaw is an all-volunteer army, and the minimum age requirement for recruitment is 18 years. The Government is taking effective measures so that no one below that age is recruited into the military. To that end, a high-level Committee for the Prevention of Military Recruitment for Under-age Children was established. Stringent monitoring is carried out, both at the recruitment stage and again at the training stage. Applicants who do not meet the minimum age requirement are turned away at the recruitment stage. Additionally, those who are found to be under 18 at the training stage are discharged from the military.

To ensure transparency, and in a spirit of cooperation, the Government arranged a visit by the Resident Coordinator and a representative of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to the two main recruitment centres in Yangon and Mandalay, and they were able to interact freely with the recruits.

The Government, of its own volition, has drawn up an action plan which includes the protection of children's rights, preventive measures, promoting public awareness and coordination with UNICEF. The action plan also incorporates provisions for the discharge of children under 18 from military service and for their reintegration into their families and communities. The United Nations country team has duly reported these positive developments, and, as the Special Representative himself has acknowledged, they had recommended that Tatmadaw Kyi be taken out of annex II. I appreciate the fact that these positive remarks were also mentioned by a number of delegations this morning.

The report, however, not only retained Tatmadaw Kyi in annex II, but also lumped Government armed forces together with insurgent groups as recruiting and using children, citing reports from embassies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) — the only instance in the report where embassies and NGOs are quoted as a source. We are also sorry to witness a degree of politicization and double standards in deciding on inclusion and exclusion from the list under annex II.

We all know the difficulty that last year's report created in the adoption of resolution 1539 (2004). But a report of the Secretary-General that comes before the Security Council, particularly in an era of application, must be based on information that is verified, and it must have credibility and, above all, objectivity. The report should not be tailored to the envisaged resolution.

On the question of the resolution, it is our strongly held view that any resolution that is contemplated should be focussed on situations that affect peace and security — situations that for that very reason are on the agenda of the Security Council. Such a resolution should encourage and take a cooperative approach towards those parties that have taken

effective measures to address the issues in cooperation with the United Nations. We hope also that such a resolution would avoid duplications and redundancies.

Myanmar has managed to put an end to armed conflict and to bring peace and stability to the country. This has enabled us to better promote and protect the rights of our children. My Government will resolutely continue in this important endeavour.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Myanmar for the kind words he addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Iceland, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Hannesson (Iceland): Iceland welcomes the Security Council's decision to deliberate on the important issue of children and armed conflict. We are especially pleased to see you here at this meeting, Mr. Foreign Minister.

We would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict for his briefing and the representatives of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for their statements.

The impact of armed conflict on children has, fortunately, been given greater attention by the international community in recent years. The ground-breaking study done in 1996 laid the foundation for United Nations consideration of this matter. The report concluded, for example, that, first, the nature of intra-State conflict has drawn civilians, including children, to the forefront of battles, and that children thus constitute a high proportion of the victims of war; secondly, children are being deliberately recruited as combatants; thirdly, armed conflict leads to a breakdown in the family support systems so essential to a child's survival and development; fourthly, Government and community support systems collapse; fifthly, children remain disproportionately exposed to the dangers of landmines; and sixthly, during armed conflicts there is a heightened risk of rape, sexual abuse and violence, prostitution and other forms of gender-based violence.

The authors of the report presented us with disturbing and often shocking reading, and called for action. Some tangible results have been made in the course of recent years, as outlined in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2005/72), dated 9 February 2005. There is increased awareness, norms have been put in place and protection of war-affected children has been placed on the international peace and security agenda.

In this context, we acknowledge the valuable work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Otunnu. Various organizations and entities of the United Nations, such as UNICEF and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, have also been pivotal in advancing the protection of children associated with armed conflict. Many non-governmental organizations have also played a vital role.

Despite the advances made, the report of the Secretary-General also clearly outlines our failures. The report records "widespread and unacceptable patterns of violations" (*S/2005/72, para. 57*) against children. Armed groups that recruit and use children in armed conflicts are named.

During last year's open debate in the Security Council on this issue, there was unanimous support for establishing a monitoring and reporting system. Indeed, the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to devise an action plan to that effect. But, as the Special Representative pointed out in that debate, the monitoring and reporting system "is of little value ... unless the information compiled can serve as triggers for action" (*S/PV.4898, p. 3*).

The Secretary-General's proposed action plan provides a basis for concerted action by the Security Council, the International Criminal Court, the Commission on Human Rights and regional organizations, triggered by monitoring reports. The Security Council should be a leader in that process.

Iceland supports the recommendation by the Secretary-General to the Security Council to take measures, such as imposing travel restrictions on certain leaders, the imposition of arms embargoes, a ban on military assistance and restrictions on the flow of financial resources to the parties.

We fully agree with the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report concerning the role of the International Criminal Court. Concrete steps should be taken to ensure prosecution of persons responsible for war crimes against children.

As regards the role of regional and subregional organizations, Iceland has actively contributed to the

activities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in its effort to combat trafficking in human beings. As we know, women and children constitute the majority of such victims.

The high — and increasing — number of allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse of local women and children by United Nations peacekeeping personnel around the world, most recently, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, demonstrate an urgent need to review current methods in addressing this problem across all peacekeeping operations. United Nations peacekeeping forces contribute courageously in their thousands around the world. It is, however, vital that they not become part of the problem. The ramifications of such sexual misconduct, both for the victims and the international community at large, will be extensive and long-term, and will require disproportionate efforts to counteract.

In conclusion, we hope that this debate and the report of the Secretary-General will culminate in an action-oriented resolution by the Security Council that could serve as an effective mechanism in an "era of application" of the internationally agreed norms and standards for the protection of children in armed conflict.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Iceland for the kind words he addressed to me and to my country.

The next speaker is the representative of Canada, on whom I now call.

Mr. Rock (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Canada welcomes this open debate on children and armed conflict, which provides an important opportunity to advance the normative framework for action and its effective implementation.

It is our duty to protect children in war-torn and post-conflict societies. To fulfil that obligation we require the support and the cooperation of the entire international community. The Security Council also has a central role to play in that regard.

Every day the rights and well-being of children are violated aggressively, despite the multitude of international legal instruments which are supposed to protect them, and despite the existence of a solid programme to prevent the involvement of children in armed conflict. The actors concerned at all levels must make progress in order to prevent violations of the rights of children or to respond to such violations.

(*spoke in English*)

It is for that reason that Canada welcomes the Special Representative of the Secretary-General's call for an "era of application" to pursue the practical and daily implementation of the norms already adopted. As noted by the Secretary-General, important progress has been made in terms of advocacy and in terms of norm development. We must now pass to the next stage: to the effective implementation and assessment of those efforts, in order to ensure concrete changes in countries heading towards, or emerging from, crises where children are at risk.

We welcome the analysis that has been provided on specific situations in the Secretary-General's report (S/2005/72), and we remain concerned about the lack of commitment and progress demonstrated by armed groups, particularly those places such as in northern Uganda, Sri Lanka and Nepal. The inclusion of reporting on all abuses against children is an important development and helps to provide a more comprehensive picture of violations and of efforts by Governments, armed actors and United Nations country teams to respond.

We remain deeply preoccupied by the continued evidence of sexual exploitation and abuse of girls and boys, including by United Nations peacekeeping personnel, aid workers and other international actors. Zero tolerance must be advanced, not only in word, but in deed. Abuse of children by United Nations personnel undermines local and international support for peacekeeping missions and threatens any positive contribution to conflict resolution that an intervention may make.

We call upon the Secretary General to ensure that accusations of sexual exploitation and abuse of children by United Nations personnel are thoroughly investigated and, where appropriate, prosecuted in accordance with domestic and international standards of human rights.

We have consistently emphasized the importance of effective monitoring and reporting as follow-up to Security Council resolutions in any domain. It is an issue of accountability.

An important effort has been made in this report to outline a possible reporting format that would

include all relevant United Nations actors and non-governmental organization (NGO) staff responsible for child protection issues. The decision to establish child protection task teams also has merit.

The reporting mechanism being proposed is wide-ranging and covers a number of issues, some of which overlap with the protection of civilians agenda and the women, peace and security agenda. It is important that we acknowledge the hard work and the contribution of the Secretary-General's Special Representative, Mr. Otunnu, and of the United Nations agencies and funds with whom he worked in developing these recommendations.

On the subject of overlap, Canada would suggest that this overlap be taken into account and that consideration be given by the Secretary-General to encouraging consolidated reporting and assessment requirements where overlap is apparent. For example, many of the violations noted in the Secretary-General's report are of relevance to civilians more broadly and not just to children.

We also suggest that attention be devoted to the fostering and development of the local capacity of States and civil society organizations, so as to prevent violations and abuses of children within a given country. Such efforts will enhance preventive action and will reduce the need to resort to intergovernmental action at the regional or international level.

As the mechanism of monitoring and reporting is intended to be a trigger to action, genuine commitments by national Governments and by the Security Council must be made to enact targeted and concrete measures of response. The Security Council must be responsive to the monitoring and reporting process, beginning with the inclusion of child protection advisers in the mandates of peacekeeping operations. Canada also supports the recommendation of the Secretary-General for targeted measures against non-compliant parties or where insufficient progress has been made by parties identified in the report. But we suggest that this be coupled with the establishment, as soon as possible, of base indicators and standards. In addition, the Security Council will need to commit to ensuring that an adequate monitoring and enforcement mechanism is put in place for such targeted sanctions.

On a different but related point, the insecurity of children and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in conflict areas have been proven to be inextricably linked. We strongly believe that the protection of children should be a priority in small arms programmes and action plans, and that that would increase the security of children affected by conflict. We suggest that this is especially so within disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes. Action on the Secretary-General's recommendations for the incorporation of best practices in DDR programmes for children is long overdue.

The application of children-specific DDR programming in recent campaigns is evidence that lessons learned regarding children are indeed being incorporated into the planning of new programmes. But gaps still remain in adequately addressing the issues of girl combatants and girls and boys in their roles as non-combatant labourers. We suggest that Member States should continue to support research, evaluation and improvement of DDR programmes for children, including culturally sensitive post-traumatic stress treatment options, with particular attention being paid to the disadvantaged position of girls in relation to access to DDR programmes.

Let me conclude by saying that this issue of children affected by armed conflict must remain an international priority. It is the focus of regular Security Council debates and resolutions, as well as being on the agenda of numerous intergovernmental organizations, including the Human Security Network. The challenge, though, as always, is to move from concerned rhetoric to concrete application. It is a challenge we must meet if we are to fulfil our responsibilities to those who are most vulnerable and to whom we owe the highest duty of care.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Canada for the kind words he addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

The next speaker is the representative of Liechtenstein, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): The report before us (S/2005/72) shows that the existence of international norms and standards and the prevention and protection measures undertaken so far have not been sufficient to stop the atrocities committed against children in situations of conflict. The list of armed groups that recruit child soldiers has not become smaller since last year. On the contrary, new groups have emerged that use children in one way or another

in their combat operations. This confirms findings of other recent studies that the use of child soldiers has become commonplace in modern warfare, in keeping with the changed nature of armed conflict and the increasing use of small arms and light weapons. Engaging in dialogue with those groups is necessary and may also have led to improvements in some situations, but it is clearly not enough in itself.

More pressure has to be exerted on parties to conflict in order to make them realize that the costs of using child soldiers outweigh the benefits. Introducing a reporting, monitoring and compliance mechanism, combined with effective follow-up, is certainly an important step an "era of application", as called for by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. While the recommended measures — such as travel bans, freezing of assets, exclusion from amnesty provisions and governance structures and imposing of arms embargoes — will be effective in some situations, they do not necessarily have the intended impact in others. It is therefore crucial that measures be tailored to their respective targets in all situations. We also have to think about how to achieve immediate improvements on the ground, as Security Council sanctions tend to take effect in the long run rather than immediately.

We welcome the listing of armed groups that recruit child soldiers or commit other war crimes against children and wish to stress that the inclusion of actors in situations that are not on the agenda of the Council is necessary for the credibility of the Council's work.

Putting an end to impunity for crimes against children and prosecuting the perpetrators are among the most important measures to be taken. Where national judiciaries that have the primary responsibility in this respect are not in a position to carry out that task for reasons of inability or unwillingness, the offenders have to be held accountable at the international level. The International Criminal Court is now carrying out an investigation into war crimes in northern Uganda, where thousands of children were abducted, forced to fight and kill and used as servants, and where they became victims of sexual crimes. We hope that that investigation creates a precedent for holding accountable perpetrators responsible for war crimes against children, and we believe that this will serve as effective deterrent for future violations.

We wish to highlight the urgent need to include the conduct of international peacekeeping and humanitarian personnel in the monitoring process. The report of the Secretary-General mentions that the allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by peacekeeping personnel appear to be more serious and more widespread than previously known. Perpetrators of such crimes must be brought to justice and effective means to prevent further misconduct have to be found — both for the security of children and other possible victims and for the standing and credibility of the United Nations.

We must not forget to talk about the indirect impact of conflict and war on children. As was pointed out in a panel discussion organized by UNICEF last week, the breakdown of conflict economies — with investment collapses and the loss of livelihoods and employment, combined with a stoppage of education and health services — has severe long-term negative effects on children. It deprives them of their childhood, while the lost years of nutrition, education and socialization reduce their prospects for the future. Experts argue for continued development assistance in times of conflict as well, in order to maintain livelihoods and public services. We should keep that in mind when we talk about humanitarian assistance and development aid, particularly now that we are engaged in discussions on how to improve international development cooperation on the basis of the Millennium Project report.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Liechtenstein for the kind words he addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

I now call on the representative of India.

Mr. Gopinathan (India): It is an honour for us to see you, Sir, presiding over the Council's deliberations today. We would like to congratulate Benin once again on its assuming the presidency of the Council for this month.

In the interest of keeping within the time limit, I shall limit my oral remarks, but the full text will be circulated to delegations.

We welcome this opportunity to participate in the Council's consideration of the issue of children and armed conflict. Children have become increasingly involved in conflicts, both as targets of violence and as combatants. During the past few years, more than

500,000 children, recruited in 87 countries, with approximately 300,000 actively participating in combat, have been involved in conflict in some form. Most often, it is not possible to make a distinction between a forced and a voluntary child soldier. The more vulnerable people are, the easier the process of recruitment becomes. Whereas some children join armed groups for food or in order to survive or to avenge atrocities in their communities, others are physically abducted by armed groups for war. Enticed by promises of food, shelter and security and sometimes plied with drugs, child soldiers are at times led to commit atrocities against other armed groups and civilian populations, sometimes even against their own communities.

We thank the Secretary-General for his report on children and armed conflict (S/2005/72). The report makes a significant attempt to address an important issue. Before I comment on some specific aspects of the report, a few general points made in the past by India on this issue need reiteration.

The first point relates to salience. How useful is it to have a thematic debate in the Security Council on subjects such as the present one? It is true that a large number of children are victims of armed conflicts, but it is also true that malaria and AIDS kill more children than conflicts do. However, we do not deal separately in the Council with children and malaria or children and AIDS, or request reports from the Secretary-General on those subjects. A sense of balance and perspective should be retained in order to make sure that too narrow a focus does not blot out the larger picture of what has sometimes been called the soft challenges to international peace and security.

The report has identified the Security Council as by far the most important international "destination for action". The report has also offered targeted sanctions as the universal remedy in cases of insufficient or no progress. However, the Council can impose sanctions under Article 41 of the Charter only if it has established, under Article 39, that there is a sufficient danger to international peace and security to justify them. Only States are parties to conventions; non-State actors are not bound by them. More important, most armed groups obey no laws, national or international. In some cases of internal conflict, non-State actors or rival political groupings may make offers to adhere to such instruments precisely to gain legitimacy or a political locus standi. Further, can a violation by a State of the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child be construed as a threat to international peace and security?

The fifth report of the Secretary-General shows that, in the years since this issue has drawn the attention of Member States, the overall progress made in addressing the circumstances of children in situations of armed conflict has not been particularly satisfactory, although there have been pockets of success. It can be seen from this report and from previous reports submitted to the Security Council that success has been achieved where the Special Representative of the Secretary-General has himself engaged in or has been involved in obtaining a commitment for the release and demobilization of child soldiers.

Of the four key components that encompass the Secretary-General's concept of the "era of application", the element of establishing a monitoring, reporting and compliance mechanism is, in our view, the least practical. The nature of situations of conflict — particularly in Africa — is such that the models of monitoring, reporting and compliance provided by the Secretary-General are impractical and would therefore be ineffective.

A body of standards for monitoring, including instruments that do not command universal adherence or acceptance, cannot be imposed on Member States. A Member State that is otherwise committed to the norms and commitments on the promotion and protection of the rights of children would be right to maintain that it would not be bound by any instrument to which it is not a party.

The use of children in armed conflict has been aggravated by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons worldwide. These weapons are inexpensive, durable, small, lightweight, easy to maintain and small enough for children to handle. Illegal arms trafficking and poor monitoring of the legal trade make it easy for children to gain access to such weapons. We are disappointed to note that the report does not call for the adoption of more legally binding commitments by Member States, such as those on the marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons and on preventing the sale of such arms to non-State actors or groups.

It cannot be denied that, in many conflict situations, the most vulnerable members of the

population — particularly women and children — are targeted with impunity. While no leniency should be shown for crimes perpetrated on innocent children, we need to see in perspective the fact that many children responsible for reprehensible crimes have often been manipulated by unscrupulous adults to take part in armed conflicts.

We support the principle, enunciated in paragraph 108 of the report, that any action by United Nations entities and international non-governmental organizations at the country level should be designed to support and complement the protection and rehabilitation roles of national authorities and should never supplant them. However, we believe that that principle remains valid not only in the context of taking necessary action based on monitoring reports, but also in designing the monitoring and reporting mechanisms themselves.

While we appreciate the substantive work undertaken to present the report, we would draw attention to a fundamental and critical issue that, although it is at the heart of this debate, has not, in our view, received adequate consideration, thereby undermining the proposals that have been made in this report. We believe that the situation of children and armed conflict has not seen appreciable amelioration because, in such situations, sometimes one and sometimes both parties are non-State actors. States can be expected — and can be counted upon — to abide by the obligations assumed by them under international legal instruments to which they are parties. The Secretary-General's monitoring proposals are applicable primarily to States. The Secretary-General's report has not made any suggestions on how non-State actors are to be held accountable. Until that aspect is addressed, the proposals that Member States consider will have limited value, as all parties to an armed conflict — not only States — need to have accountability.

The concerns raised here are aimed at finding an effective means of dealing with an important problem. Any breakdown of peace and security, and the conflicts that ensue, have a tragic impact on children. However, we feel that we ought to make decisions and act in ways that will lead to effective results. We should bear in mind the need to obtain the most efficient and optimal results, as the resources dedicated to any of these mandates are finite and inelastic, especially in an era of zero nominal growth in most United Nations budget lines. We should strive for increasing efficiency, cost-effectiveness and impact as we deal with this important question of protecting children from the impact of armed conflict.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of India for the kind words he addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

I now call on the representative of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Goonatilleke (Sri Lanka): We appreciate the fact that you, the Foreign Minister of Benin, are presiding over this meeting of the Security Council. Your presence at this meeting is certainly an encouragement for those who are grappling with the phenomenon of child soldiers.

Sri Lanka commends the Secretary-General for his report on children and armed conflict (S/2005/72), submitted under Security Council resolution 1539 (2004).

Since the Graça Machel report of 1996, the attention of the international community has been increasingly focussed on the promotion and protection of the rights of children affected by armed conflict. Following the appointment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the plight of children affected by armed conflict has received high priority from the United Nations. The continuation of violations of the rights of concerned children, despite the concerted efforts of the international community, has forced the Security Council to take a special interest in the matter, as reflected in resolutions 1379 (2001), 1460 (2003) and 1539 (2004).

The report focuses its attention on two groups of countries and entities — first, situations on the agenda of the Security Council and secondly, situations not on the agenda of the Security Council or other situations of concern, as reflected in Annexes I and II. Going through the report, it is clear that progress during the reporting period has been minimal, and atrocities against children have continued relentlessly, with the perpetrators appearing to have nothing but scorn for the efforts of the international community and the United Nations.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has been listed in Annex II of the report owing to the fact that the LTTE has for many years been engaged in recruiting children for armed combat. The report before this Council also states that the LTTE has also been

responsible for the abduction of children during the reporting period, a fact that has been corroborated by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission, and the University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna), a non-governmental organization (NGO) based in Sri Lanka. Such reports are denied by the LTTE. This practice has to be viewed against the undertaking given by that entity to Mr. Olara Otunnu in 1998 and the signing of an action plan for children affected by war by the LTTE in July 2003 under the aegis of UNICEF. In that action plan, the LTTE agreed to halt recruitment of children and release all children within its ranks. Despite those solemn undertakings, the group has continued the practice of recruiting thousands of children, in most cases by force, some of them as young as 11 years old. Moreover, the LTTE has engaged in re-recruiting those who had been released and even those who had escaped from training camps, through threats, intimidation and physical attacks on the children, as well as their family members.

According to UNICEF, between 26 December 2004 and 14 February 2005, 60 children either orphaned or affected by the recent tsunami were recruited from transit camps to be used as combatants. As of 31 January 2005, the total number of cases of under-age recruitment by the LTTE stood at 4,811, with 1,452 outstanding cases. These figures provided by UNICEF testify to the widespread child recruitment by that organization in utter disregard for the human rights of the victims, as well as for resolutions of the General Assembly and of this Council.

We are aware that there has been increased global awareness about this phenomenon, particularly since 1996. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, despite woefully inadequate resources, has done a commendable job in giving increased visibility and exposure to the issue, with the assistance of UNICEF, other United Nations agencies, national Governments, regional organizations, NGOs and others. Despite this high visibility and increased awareness, there has regrettably been no commensurate improvement in the situation on the ground. The plight of the affected children continues to remain serious. The solemn undertakings given by the parties concerned have by and large remained unfulfilled, and the practice of naming and shaming offenders does not seem to have yielded the desired results.

Sri Lanka expected that there would be a significant change on the ground with the Security Council focussing its attention on the issue. However, despite the passage of several years since the adoption of resolution 1379 (2001), there seems to be little progress. This situation cannot be allowed to continue. It has to be arrested and reversed with all the political will we can muster. Surely, the authority of the Security Council cannot be allowed to be undermined in this manner.

Against this background, Sri Lanka is in agreement with the recommendation of the report that the Security Council should take measures against those who fail to cease recruiting child combatants. Paragraph 77 of the report speaks of "levers of influence", such as international accountability as enforced by the International Criminal Court and ad hoc tribunals to bring to justice perpetrators of crimes against vulnerable children. Sri Lanka is of the view that enforcement of these measures on a gradual scale will have a deterrent impact on all those who willingly and deliberately violate the rights of children in situations of armed conflict.

Sri Lanka supports the establishment of a monitoring, reporting and compliance mechanism to support the "era of application", focussing on six broad areas of grave violations, including the killing, recruiting and abduction of children. Sri Lanka is also supportive of the view that, whenever possible, task forces on monitoring and reporting should draw from the child protection networks on the ground and, where possible, cooperation of the relevant Government institutions should be harnessed for optimum results. In this context, we are pleased to note that the report has recognized the central role of national Governments and that the United Nations entities and international NGOs at the country level should always support and complement the protection and rehabilitation roles of national authorities.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Sri Lanka for his kind words addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

I now call on the representative of Senegal.

Mr. Niang (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, after having conveyed to you the warm greetings and best wishes of your friend and brother, Cheikh Tidiane Gadio, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal, I would at the outset like to express sincere

congratulations on behalf of the Senegalese delegation for the extremely important initiative that you have taken in organizing this debate on such a pressing issue as child soldiers.

More than 300,000 children under the age of 18 are participating actively in armed conflict throughout the world. Over a million children have met this fate over the past 10 years, and hundreds of thousands of other children are enlisted in armed forces in countries where there is currently no armed conflict. These child soldiers must carry out all types of tasks. While some of them are involved in combat, others are often used for sexual purposes or as spies, messengers or servants. Some child soldiers must also lay or clear landmines, with all the risks that this activity entails.

Often enlisted by force, equipped with sophisticated and deadly weapons and supplied with intoxicating substances, which make them even more dependent on their group, child soldiers become human bombs, who are a danger both to themselves and to others.

This bleak picture, which is far from being exhaustive, shows us to what extent the scourge of child soldiers is a permanent threat to our societies and a serious violation of the rights of children by those who are recruiting them.

International norms and principles for the protection of children affected by armed conflict exist. Moreover, officials of armies or armed groups that engage in enlisting children are often known and the theatre of their operations is identifiable, because these are usually well known areas of conflict or tension. Ultimately, we are dealing here with an equation where all the factors are known — in other words, an equation without unknowns. Yet, the international community, despite the consistent efforts it has made, has always encountered enormous difficulties in tackling this problem.

The scourge of child soldiers has not yet been brought under control and remains a topic of great concern for the United Nations. Yet, Senegal is convinced that the international community can defeat this evil if it can step up its actions in at least the following three areas.

First, there must be broader ratification and rigorous implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child pertaining to the involvement of children in armed conflict, which entered into force on 12 February 2002. However, before that can occur, all States must show true political will and agree that the implementation of the Protocol must be subjected to strict and continuous oversight. Moreover, there needs to be greater use of the sanctions regime under the international law that prohibits the recruitment of, and participation by, children in armed conflicts. In that respect, the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court is an effective cornerstone in that it considers it a war crime to recruit or enlist children under the age of 15 years into armed groups or forces, or to actively involve children in hostilities.

Nevertheless, it is true that law can only have an impact if it is effectively applied and if violations are followed by sanctions. Thus, the Senegalese delegation is of the view that rigorous application of such sanctions would act as a real deterrent.

Secondly, the international community should enhance its efforts aimed at raising awareness and at prevention. In that respect, it is crucial that substantive programmes be initiated in countries where conflicts are ongoing, with a view to providing alternative prospects to children and their families. In that regard, the fights against poverty and illiteracy are, inter alia, key elements of these programmes where civil society and non-governmental organizations play a pivotal role.

Thirdly and finally, maintaining and enhancing programmes for the demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers are, in our view, of the utmost importance. Speakers from this morning and this afternoon have already highlighted those issues, so I will not address them.

Apart from the elements just mentioned, Senegal supports unreservedly, the rapid implementation of all the measures and recommendations set forth in the report of the Special Representative to the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Otunnu, whom we congratulate for his commitment to the cause of child soldiers. My country remains equally committed, together with all the States members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), to a conscientious implementation of the declaration and plan of action signed in 2000 during the ECOWAS Conference on War-Affected Children.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Senegal for his statement and for his kind words addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

I now call on the representative of Norway.

Mr. Løvald (Norway): Norway is pleased to see you, Sir, presiding over the deliberations on this very important item.

Norway is deeply concerned about the continuous reports of the killing and maiming of children, the recruitment and use of child soldiers, as well as rape and other forms of sexual violence against children in conflict situations. This year's report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict sheds further light on the widespread and unacceptable pattern of grave violations against children in conflict situations worldwide.

We welcome the proposed action plan for the establishment of a monitoring, reporting and compliance mechanism, which, we understand, is based on extensive consultations with stakeholders. The mechanism should be established as soon as possible.

Furthermore, the Security Council should consider including child protection officers in the mandates of all peacekeeping missions. We have previously called for an assessment of best practices and lessons learned as a basis for ensuring more effective interventions. Best practices should be institutionalized in the Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) of the United Nations Secretariat. There should be a focal point in the Department for dealing with the issues concerning children in armed conflict. In that regard it is important that the Department cooperate closely with UNICEF, since that agency plays a leading role in the field with regard to the protection of children's rights.

In addition to child soldier recruitment, the action plan specifies five other flagrant violations of children's rights that improved monitoring efforts should focus on. We welcome that proposal and consider it particularly important that rape and other types of grave sexual violence are also included. It is our firm belief that grave forms of gender-based violence in situations of armed conflict deserve particular attention.

The practice of listing parties to armed conflict that recruit or use children in situations of armed conflict is without doubt a major and politically significant contribution to raising awareness about the plight of these children. It also demonstrates that the international community is no longer willing to close its eyes to the tragedies of children today.

We are deeply dismayed to learn about the significant increase in allegations of sexual misconduct against United Nations peacekeeping personnel.

All allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse involving United Nations personnel must be thoroughly investigated and followed up, and preventive measures must be put in place. We welcome the report published in early January by the Office of Internal Oversight Services of the United Nations Secretariat, and the other investigations that are being carried out. We would, however, like to see a comprehensive report setting out recommendations on the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations peacekeepers and humanitarian personnel. We consider it essential to introduce rigorous pre-deployment training programmes, for military and civilian personnel, in human rights, including the issue of sexual abuse.

Norway supports the consideration of targeted measures to end atrocities against children and impunity for violators. For measures to be effective it is important that they be tailored to the individual situation in order not to unnecessarily impede efforts to end an armed conflict, which is the single most important measure that could protect the rights of the child.

We acknowledge the crucial work done by non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations with regard to advocacy, protection and rehabilitation, and developing and strengthening the monitoring and reporting regime for children and armed conflict. We agree that particular priority should be given to supporting and strengthening national and civil society institutions that protect and rehabilitate children in conflict and post-conflict situations. In that regard it is important that community reintegration activities for children be supported. We should not forget that the reintegration process takes time and requires long-term support.

We are aware that the Security Council is currently negotiating a new resolution as a follow-up to last year's Security Council resolution 1539 (2004). We sincerely hope that the Security Council will take

further steps towards bridging the current gap between existing international norms and standards and the daily life of thousands of girls and boys in situations of armed conflict.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Norway for his statement and for his kind words addressed to me as well as to my country, Benin.

I now call on the representative of Uganda.

Mr. Wagaba (Uganda): My delegation is pleased to see you, Sir, presiding over this session of the Council. We thank the Security Council for allowing my delegation to address it concerning the important issue of children and armed conflict. The fifth report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, contained in document S/2005/72, has been studied carefully by my delegation.

Paramount on the agenda of the Government of Uganda is the promotion and protection of the rights of children. Uganda is a party to all international instruments related to children's rights.

Of particular concern to my delegation is the mischaracterization contained in paragraphs 52 and 53 and annex II of the Secretary-General's report, regarding Uganda. It is not the policy of the Uganda People's Defence Forces, including the Local Defence Units (LDUs), to recruit anyone under the age of 18 years. In fact, it is required by law that any recruits into the military forces should be 18 years old or older.

The Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) and the Local Defence Units work openly with UNICEF, Save the Children Denmark and other relevant organizations to ensure that anyone below 18 years of age is not mistakenly recruited through misrepresentation of age owing to lack of a birth certificate. Any cases that arise lead immediately to discharge from the military forces.

The UPDF is directly involved in rescuing children who have been abducted by the so-called Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). There is a mechanism in place to reintegrate those children into society that includes the payment of school fees for all students whose parents are in camps for internally displaced persons and the rehabilitation of infrastructure.

The battalion referred to in paragraph 53 of the report of the Secretary-General is not being used for the re-recruitment of LRA members, but as the first point of security for those rescued by the UPDF from the clutches of the LRA before they are re-integrated into society. The camp is open for anyone to visit, including the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu.

It is crucial that the Special Representative in particular undertake a comprehensive visit to northern Uganda in order to see for himself the efforts being undertaken to rescue, screen, rehabilitate and reintegrate any rescued Ugandans in this regard. My Permanent Representative and I visited the region last month. We were able to see, and to learn at first hand, the hardships caused to residents, especially women and children, by the activities of the LRA. We were also able to listen to their hopes and aspirations for a better future. The Special Representative would find such a visit highly instructive.

The consistent momentum and continued effectiveness of the UPDF has, to a large extent, contained the LRA, which is a source of unrest in northern Uganda. Thanks to the cooperation of the Government of the Sudan, the LRA is running out of places to hide in southern Sudan and they are being forced to give up their terrorist activities. As a result, many former LRA rebel commanders have surrendered, on the realization that the offer of dialogue by the Government of Uganda is the best way for them to resolve their differences. As a result, the operational capacity of the LRA has been degraded tremendously.

Also thanks to the efforts of UPDF, the districts of Lira and Soroti are now devoid of any LRA activity. However, the LRA has used the opportunity for dialogue in bad faith. By December 2004, the LRA was using the ceasefire instituted by the Government of Uganda to reorganize, retrieve hidden ammunition and regain military momentum, thereby enabling it to continue to carry out ambushes and attacks on camps for internally displaced persons.

Whereas my delegation agrees that the LRA should be named and sanctioned to the farthest extent possible, annex II to the Secretary-General's report has erred in lumping the UPDF and the Local Defence Units together with the LRA, which is a terrorist organization. That shows a lack of understanding of the situation in northern Uganda, which has largely been created by the refusal of the Special Representative of

the Secretary-General to visit the region to get a first-hand account of the situation.

Regarding the proposals for a plan of action to establish a monitoring, reporting and compliance mechanism for children and armed conflict, my delegation welcomes the fact that the six types of grave abuses on which international action is urgently required have been clearly identified. Though commendable, the efforts suggested for the gathering, compiling and vetting of information to enhance the coordination and effectiveness of the international community need further refining in order to fully contribute to the overall aim of safeguarding children in armed conflict.

It is important for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to clearly indicate the point during the preparation and submission of reports at which he will consult Member States, including their delegations in New York. It is our view that rigorous and transparent consultations are crucial at all stages, as they will enhance concise, objective and accurate reporting. A formula should be devised to limit the institutional spread of "destination for action" centres, to avoid contradictory outcomes.

The Special Representative may also wish to elaborate upon the criteria used to arrive at the selection of regional groupings proposed to undertake joint initiatives with the United Nations while leaving out others. In that regard, the allocation of roles should also be clearly explained, including the mandate proposed for some regional organizations to take on an international role with regard to areas that fall outside their regional mandates.

The views of all stakeholders have to be accommodated. Ad hoc briefings in that regard cannot constitute a serious consultative exercise. The spirit of the 1996 Graça Machel report should be emulated with regard to transparency, objectivity and inclusiveness, to avoid politicization of the process.

It is the hope of my delegation that the recent findings of the Secretary-General regarding the shortcomings of the Special Representative in addressing issues related to children in armed conflict will be addressed expeditiously and efficiently so as to ensure that there is transparency, objectivity, accuracy and professionalism.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Uganda for his kind words addressed to me and my country, Benin.

I now call on the representative of Guinea.

Mr. Sow (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): I would like to express our appreciation to you, Mr. President, as well as to the other ministers and heads of delegation who have honoured us with their active participation in this meeting of the Security Council. I would also like to take this opportunity to convey the regret of your brother, Mamdi Condé, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Guinea, who could not be here owing to reasons beyond his control. We are also grateful to the delegation of Argentina for the effectiveness with which it guided the Council's work during January. Allow me also to congratulate Mr. Olara Otunnu for his outstanding introduction of the report (S/2005/72) of the Secretary-General, as well as for the devotion and competence he has demonstrated in the execution of his duties. I also wish to thank Ms. Rima Salah, Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, and Mr. Ibrahima Diouf, Special Adviser on Child Protection to the Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), for the conciseness and usefulness of the presentations they made this morning.

Located at the heart of a subregion long torn apart by conflict, Guinea is encouraged by the peace and stabilization process in the countries of the Mano River Union and attaches great importance to the issue of children in armed conflict. We would like to express our gratitude to our sister republic Benin for having placed this item on this month's agenda of the Security Council. In that connection, my delegation is pleased to note that the Council has taken this matter up frequently since 1999. This is an important issue, in terms of the need to ensure the full implementation of the relevant recommendations and to enhance the steps to be taken at every level so as to ensure that we eradicate the scourge of child soldiers.

We note that success has been made in terms of implementing regulatory and operational instruments on the protection of children in armed conflict. As the body responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, we encourage the Council to continue to ensure that that issue is monitored closely. With regard to honouring the commitments undertaken and the progress made to halt the recruitment and use

of children in armed conflict and other violations against children, my delegation welcomes the results of the consultations that led to the preparation of the report under consideration.

While we acknowledge the continuing difficulties with regard to access to information and to children in areas of conflict, my delegation welcomes the efforts that are under way, particularly the establishment and strengthening of national mechanisms and the coordination between United Nations country teams and national actors to bring about a better understanding of the situation of children in every crisis and conflict situation.

With regard to the serious and shocking problem of sexual misbehaviour and exploitation by United Nations peacekeeping personnel, my delegation unreservedly supports the efforts now under way. We also once again emphasize the importance of the Secretary-General's bulletin (ST/SGB/2003/13) on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. We believe that this bulletin should be used by all actors as a manual.

My delegation endorses and supports the development of the plan of action to create a systematic and comprehensive monitoring and reporting mechanism, pursuant to the Security Council's request in resolution 1539 (2004). We believe that important measures and specific initiatives have been developed to ensure the protection of children in armed conflict and that a systematic campaign to promote the implementation phase of the plan of action could contribute to rectifying dysfunctions and to ending the impunity of the perpetrators of atrocities against children.

We therefore approve the flow chart for monitoring and reporting on children and armed conflict, but we feel that its relevance will depend on the effective commitment of the various actors, their respective mandates and their resolve to take the measures appropriate to each situation. Furthermore, my delegation supports the establishment by the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights of a standing working group on children and armed conflict in order to fulfil the objectives set out in paragraph 132 of the report.

With respect to the incorporation of best practices in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes for children, my delegation is encouraged by the efforts and initiatives under way and hopes that the finalization of the module on children and disarmament, as part of the initiative entitled "Towards a United Nations approach to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in a peacekeeping environment", will contribute further to strengthening the efforts already engaged.

It should be noted, however, that the complexity and difficulties of DDR programmes require the will of leaders and other regional and local actors, as well as the cooperation of donors, the private sector and civil society, with a view to ensuring the enhanced implementation of those programmes. In that context, the measures proposed in the report to promote international and regional cooperation to prevent and combat illegal cross-border activities that harm children deserve urgent attention.

My delegation welcomes the establishment of various lists, which will keep us better informed on the development of child-related issues in various situations of armed conflict. However, it should be noted that, even where the Council is not directly seized of certain cases, it ought nevertheless to focus due attention thereupon. In that respect, a regular updating of the lists is essential. It is only through access to information that the international community can assume its responsibilities.

My delegation reiterates its belief that the peoples and children of the world, particularly in Africa, can only enjoy a common destiny in an environment of peace. Peace, in turn, is possible only if development is guaranteed, especially in the countries of Africa, through the establishment of a minimum level of justice, inter alia, in the management of their debts, an opening of the markets of the North to their products, appropriate redistribution of wealth, and increased official development assistance.

All of that requires coordination between, on the one hand, the various United Nations bodies and the institutions committed to the well-being of children, and, on the other, between the Organization and the regional, subregional and national entities.

While we appreciate the efforts now under way, my country hopes that the Security Council, together with other organs and institutions concerned, will take the measures necessary to finding appropriate and lasting solutions to the problem of children and armed conflict. We will spare no effort in making its

contribution to the collective effort to ensure the success of this meeting of the Security Council.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Guinea for his kind words addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

I now call on the representative of Gabon.

Mr. Moungara-Moussotsi (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): The delegation of Gabon, through me, congratulates Benin on its initiative to convene this debate on the sensitive topic of children and armed conflict. Your presence, Sir, reflects in no uncertain terms your country's commitment to the cause of children.

I also take this opportunity to welcome the other ministers who are present here at this debate and to express my utmost appreciation to Ambassador César Mayoral of Argentina for the skill with which he discharged his duties as President of the Council for January.

I also join in the well-deserved tribute to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu, for his excellent briefing on the Secretary-General's report. I must say that my delegation always follows with great interest the briefings of Mr. Otunnu, whose commitment to children in conflict situations is abundantly clear. I therefore reaffirm my delegation's full support for his effective action.

Today's debate on children and armed conflict falls, in my opinion, within the logic of the meeting on small arms and light weapons convened by your delegation, Sir, on 17 February. Indeed, as is often acknowledged and reiterated, many armed conflicts throughout the world — but more often in developing countries and especially in Africa — are exacerbated by small arms and give rise to the enlistment of children among the ranks of combatants.

Victims of physical abuse, children also have to endure the beastly fantasies of warlords. They are exploited in order to satisfy the selfish appetites of a handful of irresponsible politicians who lust for power and are sometimes in the pay of multinationals greedy for sordid and disgraceful profits. Their innocence deeply compromised, and used as sex slaves and soldiers, sometimes under the destructive influence of narcotics, children witness the most shocking atrocities and may even be forced to take part in them.

Is it enough, however, to condemn the harm wrought by war on the innocence, health and future of boys and girls? The answer is that more dynamic, coordinated and sustained action is necessary in preventing armed conflict and the proliferation of small arms, implementing national and international legal norms on the protection of children, and making an example of those who are guilty of crimes against children. My delegation believes that the prevention of armed conflict is essential to sparing children the untold suffering that threatens their mental and physical health and their future. Vigorous action to stem the proliferation of and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons also contributes to saving children from the horrors of war. From the legal standpoint, it must be acknowledged and recognized that the international norms in force to protect children are adequate and well adapted.

My delegation stresses the need for the international community to ensure strict compliance by the parties to a conflict with the provisions of the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and their Additional Protocols of 1977, as well as of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, whereby children affected by armed conflict must enjoy special protection and care.

In that connection, we must put an end to the impunity of those responsible for crimes against children. The perpetrators of such crimes must be prosecuted and punished. It is particularly alarming that peacekeeping personnel — the very people who are supposed to alleviate the suffering of children — may contribute to the problem. The United Nations and the countries of origin of those personnel must assume their responsibilities for clamping down on such behaviour.

Within the framework of peacekeeping operations and post-conflict programmes, it seems pivotal to us to take into account the special situation of children affected by armed conflict, as this is crucial for their rehabilitation and reintegration into an environment that is conducive to their development and well-being. Thus we invite the donor community to provide sizeable financial support to activities related to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes.

My delegation would like also to welcome the cooperation and the contribution made by United

Nations agencies such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as many others who work to protect and ensure the well-being of children. This cooperation is beneficial and will prove to be even more useful in the context of the monitoring and reporting mechanism that is advocated by the Secretary-General in his report, which has been submitted to us in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Gabon for the kind words he addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Iraq, to whom I give the floor.

Ms. Tawfiq (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to speak on behalf of the Permanent Representative of Iraq, who is otherwise engaged at this time. I should like to convey his thanks and his appreciation to you, Sir, for presiding over this open debate to discuss the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, given the importance and gravity of the question.

My delegation has read the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, contained in document S/2005/72. My delegation would like to refer to the following points with respect to the part concerning Iraq.

First, the Government of Iraq admits to facing problems in its efforts to achieve stability and security as a result of the terrorist acts carried out by extremist groups and elements loyal to the former regime. Those groups use innocent children, women and elderly people as human shields, which leads to heavy losses among those segments of the population.

Secondly, the Government of Iraq has officially announced the beginning of reconstruction operations, the provision of health and humanitarian services, and the rehabilitation of hospitals, health centres and schools in areas where military actions took place.

Thirdly, the information contained in the report came from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Office in Amman — that is to say, from outside Iraq. The Government of Iraq has repeatedly expressed to the United Nations its need for assistance from the international Organization and its specialized agencies. The Government has requested the reopening and expansion of those agencies in the north and the south of Iraq, areas which enjoy security and stability. That would enable the two parties to consult and to agree on the assistance required by the Iraqi people — children in particular. That would be preferable to that carrying out such activities through offices in other countries that are far from the actual areas needing assistance.

Fourthly, my delegation has seen no mention made of the compliance and the progress made in Iraq's Kurdistan and in other parts of Iraq which enjoy social, economic stability and security.

Fifthly, having read the report in general and in particular the part pertaining to the organigramme of the monitoring and reporting mechanism in the area of children and armed conflict, the Government of Iraq reaffirms its keen interest in cooperating with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict and in translating that cooperation into reality in order to achieve our common objective of protecting the children of Iraq.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Iraq for the kind words she addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Indonesia, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Jenie (Indonesia): Mr. President, let me start by expressing our pleasure at seeing you preside over this important meeting today on the pertinent issue of children and armed conflict. My delegation also commends the Secretary-General for his timely report contained in document S/2005/72, which gives a broad perspective on the question of the protection of children affected by armed conflict.

Indonesia is of the view that the rights of children in armed conflict should be acknowledged and respected. Those rights should be an explicit priority of, and should be firmly entrenched in, peacemaking, peacebuilding and conflict-resolution processes. My delegation warmly welcomes the significant progress made so far by various parties in the context of the process of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers, as well as in developing action plans to end their use in conflict situations. We also support measures to prevent grave violations against such children.

We are saddened to learn, however, that, notwithstanding such progress, the situation for children remains quite serious and unacceptable. The international community is now faced with a cruel dichotomy. On the one hand, clear and strong armed conflict protection standards for children involved in conflict and important concrete initiatives, particularly at the international level, have been developed. On the other hand, atrocities against children continue largely unabated on the ground.

That gloomy picture is further exacerbated by the significant increase in the number of allegations of sexual misconduct against United Nations peacekeeping personnel. It is imperative that peacekeepers uphold the trust that the local population and the international community have placed in them. In that regard, we appreciate current initiatives to undertake informal consultations with troop- and police-contributing countries to identify joint solutions to the problem.

In general, my delegation is aware of the initiative of the Special Representative, Mr. Olara Otunnu, to come up with an action plan for the establishment of a monitoring, reporting and compliance mechanism. Indonesia strongly believes that national authorities play a central and immediate role in providing effective protection and relief to children in danger. It is therefore necessary that all actions undertaken by United Nations entities and international non-governmental organizations at the country level should always be designed to support and complement the protection and rehabilitation roles of national authorities, and not supplant them.

In the case of Indonesia, articles 59 and 60 of law number 23/2002 on child protection oblige the Government to provide special protection for children in emergency situations, such as those who are internally displaced, those who have become victims of internal conflict or natural disasters, and children in armed conflict. Article 63 clearly stipulates that no one shall engage in recruiting or manipulating children for military purposes. Those who violate such provisions will be brought to justice and penalized.

Indonesia is very much aware of the complexity of the issue of children and armed conflict. A concerted and comprehensive approach, rather than partial and selective ones, should be promoted in addressing the root causes of this problem. While national Governments play a vital role, the international community should ensure generous support and assistance for national plans and programmes in this regard.

In sum, the future of humanity depends on children. The use of children in armed conflicts casts a dark shadow over their future, for children who are exposed to such violence often carry fear and hatred in their hearts and minds that have profound long-term effects. Hence, much needs to be done to alleviate their suffering and to ensure their rightful place in society through adequate support programmes. We are in duty bound to extend our cooperation to the Secretary-General in his efforts to address the issue of children affected by armed conflict.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Indonesia for the kind words he addressed to me and to my country.

The next speaker is the representative of Niger, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Boureima (Niger) (*spoke in French*): I am speaking on behalf of Ambassador Moutari, who is unable to be present at this meeting. Let me begin, Mr. Minister, by conveying the regrets of your counterpart, my Foreign Minister, Ms. Aïchatou Mindaoudou, who, despite the best of intentions, was unable to come to New York to participate in today's meeting.

I wish, at the outset to welcome the initiative of the Republic of Benin — and of the United Nations, through the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict — to convene this meeting on war-affected children, an item to which my country attaches great interest. As members know, the issue of child soldiers remains a source of great concern for the international community, which in recent years has continued to take steps to protect children in conflicts and to include them in programmes of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

Yet the adoption of a number of legal instruments — the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child and its 2000 Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict among the most important among them — has not prevented children from falling victim to armed conflicts. Indeed, in recent years we have observed living conditions

deteriorate for many children, especially in conflict zones, where children account for a great proportion of civilian victims of armed conflict.

Over the past decade, some 20 million children have been forced to flee their homes because of armed conflicts, which have killed more than 2 million and injured three times that many. Moreover, each year between 8,000 and 10,000 children are killed or maimed by landmines.

In addition to all those problems, an even more repellent phenomenon has emerged: that of child soldiers — boys and girls under age 18 — who are estimated to number more than 300,000 and who are embroiled in more than 30 conflicts throughout the world, and particularly in West Africa. Here, it is important to note and to decry the increasing number of violent conflicts, especially in Africa, with their attendant desolation: including 'oss of life, mass displacement, rape and ethnic cleansing.

As a rule, women and children are the main victims of armed conflict, because conflicts confine them to places where they have no access to their basic needs for survival. In such places, children are forcibly snatched from their schools or from their homes — or even in the street — to be enlisted in armed factions. Sometimes they enlist voluntarily, either seeking a way to improve their lives or out of ignorance. This phenomenon arises in most African countries with ongoing conflicts.

Such participation by children in conflicts led the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to address the issue by holding a ministerial conference on war-affected children, held at Accra, in April 2000. The outcome of the conference gave rise to the adoption by ECOWAS heads of State or Government, at Abuja, Nigeria, in May 2000, of the Accra Declaration and Plan of Action on War-Affected Children, which call for and outline strategies for child protection in situations of armed conflict. Among the important decisions that were adopted, we can be proud of the decision to hold annually, in all States members of ECOWAS, a West African Week of Truce for War-Affected Children, coinciding with the annual 16 June Day of the African Child declared by the African Union. They also include the convening of a meeting of ECOWAS Ministers for Foreign Affairs to consider the role played by national Governments and ECOWAS in the protection of war-affected children.

For its part, Niger is grateful that it has not been ravaged by major conflict. I can affirm that Niger has not experienced the phenomenon of child soldiers. But that does not prevent it from standing in solidarity with other Africans — particularly those of West Africa. Like other countries of the subregion, Niger is concerned at the instability that prevails there. Porous borders, migration and transboundary exchanges mean that a conflict in one country can have repercussions in neighbouring countries, both near and far. Thus, during the tragic events in Sierra Leone, many people of the Niger with dual nationality who knew Niger only on paper had to be repatriated as a matter of urgency. That is also the present situation in Côte d'Ivoire, where a large Niger community is directly affected by the conflict.

But, as it is concerned about the future and the well-being of children, Niger has ratified all the international conventions and treaties relating to the rights of the child, including the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child, the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child and its 2000 Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, the 1999 International Labour Organization Convention on the worst forms of child labour and the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the 1990 World Summit for Children.

I would note that my country has also adopted national legislation and regulations relating to those instruments. Among them I might mention the ruling creating a national commission on penal and civil legislative reform. Moreover, Niger is a signatory to conventions relative to the protection of child refugees and children in conflict situations.

We have adopted several other judicial and institutional measures that relate to children. Among such judicial measures, I am pleased to recall the establishment of some 40 children's courts and the training of judges for minors, which has been under way since 1999. The penal code and the code of criminal procedure include provisions specifically for the administration of justice with respect to minors. Turning to institutional measures, there are numerous structures concerned with children in Niger, such as the Ministries for the Advancement of Women and Child Protection, Youth, Sport, Basic Education and Health, among others, which work to improve the situation of children and young people in Niger.

As members know, in 2001 in Dakar, ECOWAS heads of State or Government declared the period 2001 to 2010 the Decade of a Culture of the Rights of the Child in the ECOWAS area. The Decade should make it possible to consolidate progress in the sphere of safeguarding the rights of the child and in improving awareness of the problems of war-affected children by making children a priority in all development programmes.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Niger for the kind words addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Mali.

Mr. Diarra (Mali) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, my delegation is pleased to see you presiding over this meeting of the Security Council. My delegation would like to commend Benin for holding this open debate on the question of children and armed conflict. We are also grateful to the Secretary-General for the excellent report issued as S/2005/72, of 9 February 2005. We wish to congratulate the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children in Armed Conflict for his briefing.

The information provided on compliance with commitments made shows that despite the improvements we have seen with regard to the recruitment of children in situations of armed conflict, certain armed groups have continued that practice. However, we are pleased to see that the parties are proving to be more open to dialogue with United Nations structures.

On 20 January 2004, speaking on behalf of the Human Security Network, my delegation stressed the overall goal of "bridging the gaps" between universal human rights standards and their implementation and between the concepts, programmes and systematic responses in the field. The Human Security Network has developed a support strategy that identifies a series of guidelines, including the strengthening of monitoring and training, and an early warning function in the case of violation of children's rights.

My delegation is pleased that the Secretary-General has proposed to the Council an action plan for the establishment of a monitoring and reporting mechanism. That action plan, which is the result of joint efforts by UNICEF and other United Nations entities, Governments, regional organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), transforms the programme of work concerning children in armed conflict into concrete measures and initiatives. My delegation hopes this will open the long-awaited implementation phase.

The four parts of the implementation of the plan, as identified in the report, should, in the opinion of my delegation, be completed by a fifth part, one concerning the imposition of sanctions by responsible organs for non-compliance with established standards. The list of grave violations that should be particularly monitored — six in number — should also include a reference to the worst forms of child labour, the subject of Convention No. 182 of the International Labour Organization.

My delegation agrees with the Secretary-General that to ensure its credibility, the monitoring and reporting system must be based on precise and clearly identified standards, and those standards must be established in order to make practice uniform. They will be based on national and international legal commitments, but they will also be inspired by best practices observed in the field. The training modules for the different players will be based on those standards. The sources of law that the report refers to will strengthen the national legislation of States in the area of child protection. Furthermore, parties whose activities must be monitored are both Governments and armed groups. The dialogue advocated in the report must, in principle, influence the conduct of the parties.

However, if there are no conclusive results, pressure must also be considered. The use of targeted measures will certainly ensure that parties will respect their international commitments. The identification, in the different reports of the Secretary-General, of actors who abuse those practices is an intermediate step that should be pursued. Entities in charge of gathering, verifying and compiling information at the country level, in particular civil society and NGOs, should be strengthened. Bodies that have decision-making power should show more firmness and determination. I am thinking in particular of the Security Council and the International Criminal Court, as well as the special tribunals, because in this area law without coercion will have only a limited effect.

My delegation is convinced that strengthening early warning mechanisms could help reduce the adverse impact of serious violations of children's rights. However, the best protection for children will be found in the establishment of an environment that is conducive to the development of individuals, one characterized by the primacy of law, where a minimum of social welfare and social justice could be achieved, an environment in which all segments of society, including youth, will play an effective role in the management of public affairs.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Mali for his kind words addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

There are no more speakers inscribed on my list. I shall now give the floor to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu, to respond to comments made and questions raised by speakers.

Mr. Otunnu: The day has been long and full and I shall not detain the Council for much longer. My comments will be very telegraphic. The critiques, insights and observations made by members of the Council and other delegates have all been noted. I only wish to clarify a few areas of common concern.

With regard to the role of Governments, let me state as clearly as I possibly can that the primary responsibility for protecting children lies with the national authorities, and that the role of United Nations agencies and other international actors should supplement those efforts, not supplant them. In situations where, because of the protracted experience of war, national institutions have been weakened, the rejuvenation of those institutions should be a priority for all international partners.

Regarding dialogue with parties in conflict, again, let me clarify that this dialogue is solely for the purpose of ensuring protection of and access to vulnerable children. It should be done in complete transparency, with the knowledge and cooperation of local authorities, and it should not in any way compromise the framework of peace processes and negotiations; it should fall within that framework.

We are interested in the monitoring exercise not simply in terms of what has gone wrong — the bad news, the grave violations. As you see in the Secretary-General's report, we are equally interested in what is going right. In fact, the ultimate goal is to ensure that in every situation remedial measures are taken by the parties in conflict working in collaboration with United Nations agencies and local civil society to remedy the situations.

With regard to what kinds of measures should be taken, again, it is important to emphasize that there is a wide range of measures to be brought to bear on parties to conflict so that they modify their conduct relative to the protection of children. Those measures include public opinion, both local and international; and juridical measures and juridical accountability before national courts and before the International Criminal Court. They certainly include diplomatic and political pressure, both local and international. And, as an extreme measure — because we are now dealing with extreme situations — there should also be targeted sanctions. However, sanctions are not to be applied exclusively, but in addition to other measures. Together, these form a comprehensive approach that should lead to the modification of the conduct of parties on the ground.

Civil society and non-governmental organizations — both local, based within the countries and communities concerned, and international — have crucial roles to play in this exercise. Indeed, that is laid out in great detail in paragraphs 136 and 137 of the report.

I should now like to say one word about whether or not we are talking about situations beyond the context of conflict: no. Some of the abuses described in this report may be reproduced; they may be perpetrated in situations other than conflict situations. But this mandate, this exercise, is strictly about violations that are taking place in the context of conflict.

Finally, a word about the issue of resources. The mechanism being proposed for monitoring and reporting — and this is stated explicitly in the report — does not envisage the creation of a new entity or structure within the United Nations. Rather, it calls for the streamlining, the coordination, of the existing actors and existing structures, both on the ground and at the Headquarters level. Secondly, in connection with resources, particularly at the ground level if the operational actors — such as UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and non-governmental organizations — are to perform well the roles envisaged in this mechanism, they will

need to strengthen their capacities, such as staff; for example, they will need to provide better and more targeted training. And that will have implications in terms of the resources that they will mobilize in the way in which they usually mobilize resources for programmes of this nature.

All of the other points are well noted; I shall take up some of them bilaterally, especially the exceedingly important critique provided by the delegation of India, reiterating points that they have previously made. We are having an ongoing bilateral dialogue on those very important points.

Finally, we are very grateful to you, Mr. President, for sending the clearest possible signal that our children matter and their protection matters because the future of our societies matters. I also thank the Ministers from France, Japan and Tanzania, who came from their capitals to be here today to lend their support and influence to this project. Finally, I thank the members of the Council and the other representatives for their participation.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Otunnu for the clarifications that he has provided.

After consultations among members of the Security Council, I have been authorized to make the following statement on behalf of the Council:

> "The Security Council has considered the matter of children and armed conflict and taken note with deep concern of the continued recruitment and use of children by parties to armed conflict in violation of international obligations applicable to them, as reported by the Secretary-General in his fifth report (S/2005/72). It reiterates its commitment to address in all its forms the impact of armed conflict on children.
>
> "The Council reaffirms its strong condemnation of the recruitment and use of child soldiers by parties to armed conflict in violation of international obligations applicable to them and of all other violations and abuses committed against children in situations of armed conflict. It urges all parties to armed conflict to halt immediately such intolerable practices.
>
> "The Council recalls all its previous resolutions, which provide a comprehensive framework for addressing the protection of children affected by armed conflict. It reiterates its determination to ensure respect for its resolutions and other international norms and standards for the protection of children affected by armed conflict.
>
> "The Council recalls particularly paragraph 2 of its resolution 1539 (2004) dated 22 April 2004, requesting the Secretary-General, taking into account the proposals contained in his report as well as any other relevant elements, to devise urgently an action plan for a systematic and comprehensive monitoring and reporting mechanism, which utilizes expertise from the United Nations system and the contributions of national Governments, regional organizations, non-governmental organizations in their advisory capacity and various civil society actors, in order to provide timely, objective, accurate and reliable information on the recruitment and use of child soldiers in violation of applicable international law and on other violations and abuses committed against children affected by armed conflict, for consideration in taking appropriate action.
>
> "The Council takes note of the Secretary-General's proposal for an action plan for the establishment of a monitoring, reporting and compliance mechanism, in accordance with this request and with paragraph 15 (b) of resolution 1539 (2004), and has started consideration of the Secretary-General's proposal.
>
> "The Council reiterates the crucial need for a systematic and comprehensive monitoring and reporting mechanism, and its determination to ensure compliance and to put an end to impunity. The Council further reiterates its intention to complete expeditiously the process of the establishment of the mechanism.
>
> "In this regard, it has started work on a new resolution with the aim of its early adoption and with due consideration of views expressed by the United Nations Member States during the open debate held on 23 February 2005, in order to take forward the implementation of its previous resolutions with a view to ending the recruitment or use of child soldiers in violation of applicable international law and other violations and abuses committed against children affected by armed conflict situations, and promoting their reintegration and rehabilitation."

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2005/8.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.